

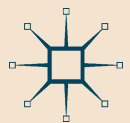
A medieval manuscript illustration depicting a courtly scene. In the center, a woman in a blue and red gown is being embraced by a man in a blue hat. To the right, a man in a brown tunic and red hose holds a golden staff. Other figures in various medieval attire are visible in the background. The scene is set against a red background with a blue landscape below.

Arthurian and Courtly Cultures

THE LEGACY OF COURTLY LITERATURE

From Medieval
to Contemporary Culture

EDITED BY DEBORAH NELSON-CAMPBELL
AND ROUBEN CHOLAKIAN



Arthurian and Courtly Cultures

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Rouben Cholakian
Editors

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From Medieval to Contemporary Culture

palgrave
macmillan

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FOREWORD

Although most of the essays in this collection show the long reach of the Western tradition of courtliness and courtly literature, many of the defining elements of the latter seem to be universal and not culture- or time-specific. In fact, most cultures at some point or other in their development generate some kind of court-based culture. The conditions for this vary, of course, but are generally dependent on a monarchy and attendant aristocracy with a taste for literature or other forms of the arts, and the financial means to patronize authors, musicians, artists, and the artisans of the book, amongst others. The rise of courtly literature often appears to coincide with periods of peace, when the need to defend societies against external enemies becomes less acute and leisure time expands. In the Middle Ages, if courtly literature develops first in the south of France and migrates to the north, it is soon exported, as it were, to other linguistic areas. The courtesy, courtliness, courtly love, and courtly literature of medieval Germany, England, the Low Countries, and the Nordic regions, for example, all have quite distinct characteristics arising from features of their social structures, as do their related notions of chivalry and knighthood. Nor do these literatures develop contemporaneously or in lockstep. Courtly literature in English is quite late off the mark, since the audience for courtly literature in England was largely Francophone until the age of Chaucer. The history of courtly literature, both in French and other languages, is a history of reception, as authors and audiences respond in different ways to works which, together, constitute a continuously evolving tradition. And it should not be forgotten that many courtly authors

work with a profound knowledge of classical texts, of which they perceive themselves as both the inheritors and continuators. Such responses can vary from slavish imitation, through thoughtful emulation, to criticism and even outright parody. Scholarship has, over the decades, learned not to insist on an artificial dichotomy between courtly and non-courtly literature, as the two exist alongside one another in a wider corpus and, in some cases, may even be aimed at the same readership and audience. The desire for social acceptability among the bourgeoisie, for example, expands the audience beyond the courts into the merchant classes. When the latter commission works of literature, they may bear the marks of a more mercantile and less aristocratic world-view, and when non-aristocrats read earlier courtly literature, they may not grasp all the subtleties of courtly ethics and behavior. From the beginning, courtly literature functions as a kind of didactic mirror for members of the courts, albeit capable from the outset of self-criticism and questioning. For all kinds of audiences, courtly literature also tends to work as wish-fulfilment, although for later ones, the elements of fantasy are more pronounced.

The courtly tradition is visible everywhere in post-medieval cultures, its most obvious development being manifest in royal courts such as those of Elizabethan England or the France of Louis XIV, just to cite two examples among many. It could not be argued with much plausibility that the royal courts of twenty-first-century Europe carry on the tradition of courtly literature. Indeed, some might justifiably reproach the House of Windsor or the Netherlandic House of Orange with philistinism. Alan Bennett's *The Uncommon Reader* (2007) even shows Elizabeth II discovering the joys of reading after fortuitously coming upon a mobile library at the back of Buckingham Palace. The courts of modern politicians, with the possible exception of François Mitterrand, do not emerge in a much better light. The absence of patronage today renders modern courtly culture, in the few cases it exists, largely passive. Yet modern popular song is replete with motifs and themes of the medieval courtly love lyric, some films and novels retell courtly tales and romances, while others reconstruct their own vision of the courtly Middle Ages. Consequently, the legacy of courtly literature has much to tell us about the prevailing issues of our own times, as well as those of the past.

Madison, USA

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Introduction

Rouben Cholakian and Deborah Nelson-Campbell

In the past, most of the critical work on the courtly tradition and the closely linked phenomenon of courtly love has concentrated on its earliest manifestations, most notably the Occitan *canso*,¹ other troubadour and trouvère songs along with various aspects of chivalry, and the legends associated with King Arthur and his knights, particularly Lancelot and Tristan and their catastrophic love affairs. In recent years, however, more attention has been paid to medieval themes that appeared after the time frame of the period referred to as the Middle Ages. In 1979, Leslie Workman founded a journal, *Studies in Medievalism*, for the study of post-medieval images and perceptions of the Middle Ages.² In addition, the International Society for the Study of Medievalism exists to promote the interdisciplinary study of the popular and scholarly reception of the Middle Ages in post-medieval times.³ Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., hosted in 1995 an international conference

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on “Cultural Frictions: Medieval Cultural Studies in Post-Modern Contexts”. In spring 2010, the first issue of *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* was published. Two important recent works, by F.R.P. Akehurst and Judith M. Davis, and also Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay, lay solid groundwork for an understanding of the courtly tradition and thus serve as a preparation for appreciating the evolution and spreading of the medieval courtly concepts.⁴ This new anthology, *The Legacy of Courtly Literature: From Medieval to Contemporary Culture*, continues the tradition already begun and provides extensive evidence of the wide range of ideas and the broad geographical and temporal expanses that has come under the influence of the courtly tradition and the literary *topos* of courtly love since the twelfth century, when the poets of *langue d’oc* brought these concepts to the attention of their culture. The importance of this medieval cultural tradition cannot be exaggerated even though for a long time it was mostly ignored, even though early on C.S. Lewis recognized the courtly tradition as the source of our modern notions of genteel behavior and romantic love.⁵

The ten essays explore this extensive courtly legacy in the domains of literature, film, and music while demonstrating that the power of the medieval *topoi* of adulterous love expressed in literature and film along with the continuing influence of classical themes on courtly tradition continue to evolve and influence the culture of the twenty-first century. The authors of the essays illustrate many times over that the artistic tradition invented by creative imaginations long ago in time and space has not disappeared and has continued to inspire artists up to the present day.

This volume is meant to appeal to both the specialist and the generalist, who may not be very familiar with medieval literary traditions. Thus, before giving voice to the various essayists represented here—all published scholars in their fields—it would most likely be helpful for the uninitiated reader to learn something of just what is generally meant by courtly literature and courtly love (*fin’amor*).

If a troubadour or trouvère sought appreciation among the aristocracy in twelfth-century Europe, he/she was obligated to compose songs in the courtly tradition, since that was what the intelligentsia was enjoying and seeking with a passion. Inspired by the works of the Occitan poets, writers of courtly romances and inventors of the Arthurian legend found

an enthusiastic audience eager to identify with heroes, who behaved according to a special code that required civil interactions between noble men and women and idealized a love relationship that existed only in fantasy.

An example of the courtly tradition familiar to most present-day readers of medieval literature is the legend of Tristan and Iseult. In the nineteenth century, Richard Wagner brought much attention to their poignant love story with his operatic re-telling. Then, in the early twentieth century, Joseph Bédier combined into a coherent narrative the many and diverse episodes of the legend that initially were related orally by jongleurs.⁶

Though there are several different versions of the legend recorded in French in the twelfth century, the basic story line speaks of a young hero, Tristan, who brings home the lovely Iseult as future bride for his uncle, King Mark. En route, the two young people drink a love potion that causes them to become adulterous lovers, destined to constantly trick and betray their king. Here, the story reminds us of the later Romeo and Juliet tragic tale, wherein the unnecessary death of Tristan leads to the death of a devastatingly aggrieved Iseult.

Another twelfth-century poet also recorded love stories that she heard sung, this time by Breton jongleurs (or so she says). Marie de France has inspired admiration in the feminist community as well as among medieval scholars in general. Very little is actually known about this French-born woman, who seems however, to have spent most of her adult life in some unidentified Anglo-Norman convent. What we do know is that she had at least some familiarity with English and Breton and wrote in French. Her surviving work indicates that she was well educated and certainly aware of Celtic oral narratives related in Breton *lais*. Marie de France imaginatively and cleverly shaped the poetic form of the *lais* into a successful vehicle for love tales, which often included the supernatural. Many of her twelve narratives with such titles as *Bisclavret* and *Equitan*, capture the inner turmoil of their distraught characters, more often than not involved in some sort of adulterous relationship.

Chrétien de Troyes, a contemporary of Marie de France, produced five major rhymed romances in the vernacular *langue d'oïl* of Northern France. The multiplicity of manuscripts of his works proves that his *romans* were quite popular with the noble patrons of his day. The best-known of these are *Perceval* and *Lancelot, The Knight of the Cart*, which probably had the most important influence on later Arthurian narratives.

Lancelot, The Knight of the Cart, brings together two of the most famous figures in all of courtly literature, Lancelot and Queen Guinevere. The narrative divides into three sections: the hero's unusual upbringing by a fairy mother, his rescue of Queen Guinevere, and his subsequent adulterous love for this married woman, the wife of King Arthur.

The Arthurian tradition that grew up around the mythical figure of the king/hero Arthur and that famous love match between his wife and a member of his Round Table included stirring tales of military prowess, heroic gestures and secret loves among all the knights that surrounded Arthur. Modern audiences continue to be fascinated even mesmerized by the events in the lives of Arthur's greater-than-life companions, all of whom share in the lofty and daring aspirations honored at Cornwall's mystical Tintagel Castle and at Camelot.

The central focus of nearly all of this literature is love, a love that is most often outside the boundaries of the marriage contract. How did this theme come to be merged into accounts of courage and conflict of honor?

At the beginning of the twelfth century, in what is today southwestern France, the courts of that region experienced an amazing burst of poetic energy. These early experimental poets created an apparently new concept of love, which, in 1883, the eminent French medievalist, Gaston Paris, labeled "courtly love."⁷ Thanks to contemporary anthologies of verse, *Chansonniers*, and biographical sketches, *vidas* and *razos*, we know the names of several hundred *trobadors* (men) and *trobairitz* (women) and have copies of more than 2000 poems.⁸

The first recorded courtly poet was a nobleman of high rank and importance. Guillaume IX, Duke of Aquitaine and Count of Poitiers, has left us eleven poems, already indicating the thematic direction this poetry would take for the next several generations. His poems, composed in the *langue d'oc* idiom of the south of France, are crucial thus to the scholar's understanding of what came to be known as the concept of *fin'amor*.

But, just as Guillaume was not literally the first troubadour, Guiraut de Riquier (1230–1292), although labeled as such, was by no means the last. He is, nonetheless, a significant source for defining how this poetry increasingly morphed into a spiritual and abstract expression of love. Indeed, in the later adaptations of the theme, the idealized woman turned into the Virgin Mary—as some would point out—the ultimate distancing and abstraction of the female figure.

While some of the most iconoclastic modern readings of the Occitan love song, the *canço*, in particular, have challenged conventional interpretation, one can still enumerate this poetry's generally agreed-upon characteristics: the unattainable, idealized (usually married) woman and the poet's own paradoxical suffering and desire for self-perfection. As Jaufré Rudel succinctly put it: *Iratz et gauzens me-n partrai* (I leave both sad and joyous).⁹

It is certain that in the early years of the tradition, during the medieval period, Lewis's contention that "neither the form nor the sentiment of this old poetry has passed away without leaving indelible traces on our minds"¹⁰ strikes us as incontrovertible. The Occitan themes quickly moved from the south to the north of France when, in 1137, Aliénor d'Aquitaine (granddaughter of the first troubadour) wedded the king of France, Louis VII. This remarkable queen transported not only her entourage to the new milieu but also her taste for the courtly love poem. However, while the poets of the south sang in the *langue d'oc* of their region, these northern artists translated the well-known love ideology into the dialect of their own courts, *langue d'oïl*: same ideas, different words. Aliénor, continued to spread the love message a third time when she parted from the French king and married the king of England, Henry II. Despite their separation, she had an influence on her two daughters, Marie and Aélis, who maintained the poetic tradition in their own courts, at Champagne and Blois.

This early spread of the tradition of courtly love within the context of genteel behavior among the noble class is uncontested by the scholarly community. But can one say the same about the poetic traditions of later years, as Lewis would have us believe? The essays included in this volume argue for the affirmative.

The mode of artistic expression may vary with time and place, but the essential substance remains. The first three essays deal with the legacy of courtly literature (values, themes, figures) from the early Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and the last seven address the medieval-modern link. The first essay in the collection does not extend analysis beyond the medieval world. In fact, Jane Chance looks backward as well as forward as she examines the relationship between the medieval vernacular legends of King Arthur and the great epics by the ancient Greek and Roman authors, Homer, Virgil, and Ovid. In her review of three well-known heroes, Gawain, Lancelot, and Perceval, she discovers a significant and sometimes surprising interplay between Ovidian and Arthurian mythology.

Rupert Pickens moves into the fifteenth century with his analysis of the poetry of François Villon. Generally viewed as a man of the people, Villon was not only aware of the courtly tradition but was quite capable of writing verse in the courtly manner when it suited his artistic purposes. The time he spent at the court of Charles d'Orléans (sometime between 1457 and 1461) left its mark on him. Normally, in his poetry, he chose to celebrate criminality and vulgarity, but during the period between Christmas 1456 and Easter 1461, he demonstrates that he knows how to address princes in the language of the court. Three of these poems are found only in the personal manuscript of Charles d'Orléans.

Shakespeare came under the influence of courtly literature in more than one guise but, most surprisingly, as Carol Heffernan demonstrates, in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* in the form of the *fabliau*. Carol argues that the *fabliau* belonged to the literature of the court, even if its traditional themes were in direct contrast with those of the troubadour and trouvère songs and the romances. Long assumed to belong to bourgeois entertainment, the popular *fabliau*, contrary to what medievalists once believed, was in fact a real, if condescending, source of amusement for the European upper classes and thus belongs in the category of literature of the court.

Carol Dover uses as her thematic point of departure the well-established relationship between bestiaries and the narrative *lais* of Marie de France in order to study J.K. Rowling's popular Harry Potter tales. Rowling graduated from Exeter University in 1987 with a bachelor's degree in French and Classics. She was very familiar with both the Bestiaries and the *Lais* of Marie de France. These medieval resources, one in Latin, the other in Old French, provide the Harry Potter novels with a rich array of characters and thematic development. The remarkable Weasley family, who are prominent in all seven novels and the epilogue, are a prime example of Rowling's inventive mind. Carol Dover establishes links between the bestiary accounts of the weasel, Marie de France's lai *Eliduc* and Rowling's Weasley family. Who would have thought that this acquaintance with medieval tradition would illuminate the vastly popular world of Harry Potter?

We now proceed from Harry Potter to the influence of the Occitan and Old French songs on the lyrics of modern music. Beverly Evans focuses on four facets of the courtly register and their associated lexical fields: the power of love, the garden of love, the portrait of the lady, and

the lover's lament. The lyrics she cites from each category demonstrate beyond a doubt that modern love lyrics are a distant echo of the lyrics of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century love songs.

Ray Cormier focuses on another courtly theme that is pervasive in these love songs: "You make me want to be a better man." Selecting examples from several recent movies, he proves that sacrifice and suffering can ultimately lead to the improvement in character and deportment of a male protagonist in love, as claimed by many a troubadour.

Also working with film, but from an entirely different perspective, Joan Tasker Grimbert explores the treatment of the love potion in four film versions of the legend of Tristan and Iseult, which were shaped by very different cultures.

Haines analyzes film adaptations of that other popular medieval legend: King Arthur and his court of heroes. But instead of the usual textual analysis, he defines the effects of music on the cinema graphic narrative themes, noting that "[W]hen we watch a movie, we also hear it." It must be remembered that music played an important role in medieval courts and that the poems in Occitan and Old French were, in fact, songs sung to an accompanying instrument. Framing his discussion with the expression "time travel," he distinguishes between music from the Middle Ages played in these films and intentionally anachronistic music selected to evoke various moods.

The two final essays take us into somewhat different milieus. Petrovskaia compares the double visions of the Merlin figure in Welsh literature, the fool and the wise man. With Tagaya, we move to the Far East and to the Japanese ceremonial traditions at the Imperial Court. This curious geographic juxtaposition reminds us that the love theme is, indeed, a universal one and thus inescapably brings us back to the question of the thematic analogues where, when and how real.

These essays have brought the courtly theme into modern times. They have shown, in a number of different artistic settings, that the courtly tradition of heroic deeds is not only very much alive but without question here to stay. Lewis's bold assertion that our very idea of romantic love owes much to *fin'amor* is thus not the mere passing quip of a clever Oxford don, but a perceptive literary and psychological truth worth taking seriously.

Rouben Cholakian
Deborah Nelson-Campbell

NOTES

1. The *canço*, which became the *chanson* in the North of France and the *canzone* in Italy, was the preferred poetic form for singing of love. It typically consisted of five or six stanzas of identical pattern and often ended with a kind of refrain called the *envoy* or *tornado*.
2. See website for *Studies in Medievalism*.
3. See website for International Society for the Study of Medievalism.
4. Akehurst and Davis, eds. *Handbook of the Troubadours*. (University of California 1995) and Gaunt and Kay, eds. *The Troubadours: An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).
5. *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford University Press, 1958), 3–4.
6. *Le Roman de Tristan et Iseult* (Paris: Piazza, 1900).
7. “Études sur les romans de la table ronde: Lancelot du Lac.” *Romania* 12 (1883), 519.
8. Elizabeth W. Poe, “The Vidas and Razos,” *A Handbook of the Troubadours*, pp. 185–197. Robert Taylor, “Bibliography,” *A Handbook of the Troubadours*, 467–474.
9. “Lanquand li jorn son lonc en mai,” (line 15). Hamlin, Frank R., Peter T. Ricketts, and John Hathaway, eds. *Introduction à l'étude de l'ancien provençal*. Geneva: Droz 1967. 89–91.
10. *The Allegory of Love*, 1.

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The Arthurian Knight Remythified Ovidian: The Failures of Courtly Love in Three Late Medieval Glosses

Jane Chance

Conjoincture—the interpolation of classical myth in Arthurian romance in the Middle Ages—usually involves an allusion or image used to gloss or interpret the transgressions of the knight. Its very hybridity implicitly conveys the commentary tradition’s well-known moralizations as a means of critiquing culture and its gender relations, particularly as embodied in the practice of the courtly, especially involving courtly love—the reception of which is the subject of this collection. Such crossover I will argue here by means of three examples of an Arthurian knight glossed in a late medieval romance (or commentary on a romance or epic), implicitly

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or explicitly, by means of a classical mythological figure who is, to use Jauss's term, "remythified" by the comparison, which depends upon the cultural and historicized adaptation of classical myth particular to a specific time and place.¹ The knight might appear either in the text of a vernacular work involving classical mythology or in an accompanying illustration. The representation of each knight signifies an amalgam of two traditions, the courtly and scholastic, the Celtic and classical, the Arthurian and mythological. Here, Perceval is conflated with Perseus, the exemplar of the good—virtuous and chaste; Lancelot is paired with Hermaphroditus, who succumbs to his own self-love in distancing himself from the love of real women; and similarly, Gawain and Pygmalion are linked with Narcissus.

All three knights figured originally and prominently in twelfth-century vernacular romances by Chrétien de Troyes, namely, *Lancelot ou Le Chevalier de la Charrette* (*Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart*) and the unfinished *Perceval ou le Conte du Graal* (*Perceval, the Story of the Grail*). There, all three knights appear as Other, or foreign to the Arthurian court: they come from abroad or from some kind of deliberately rustic or alien site or situation. Lancelot of Benwick comes from the Saumarois region of Anjou–Touraine; Perceval was raised outside civilization, in Wales, like Welsh (and Breton) knight Gawain. And for whatever reason, while all three are exemplary as knights, whether in valor and might, spirituality, or loyalty and courtesy, they are tested in the romances in various ways, often sexually, in relation to their courtly relationships with women—and fail.

That a classical and mythological subtext underpins the chivalric and courtly narrative in some Arthurian romances has long been recognized by scholars. Medieval vernacular legends of King Arthur often reworked aspects of antique epics; at the same time, medieval authors' familiarity with classical myth allowed its use as a gloss on the Arthurian legendarium. The long history of scholarship on the classical underpinnings of Arthurian romance, particularly from Ovid, begins early in the twentieth century with Edmond Faral,² and with Charles Bertram Lewis tracing classical sources, Greek and mythological, in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes.³ Several more recent sources involve the use of Virgil's *Aeneid* as a means of authorization in the medieval romance or chronicle, specifically in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*) in relation to the patronymic figure Brutus, great-grandson of Aeneas, and founder of Britain; and on varied heroic aspects of the classical as transmitted by Latin chronicles such

as Geoffrey's and by the Virgilian and Homeric epic tradition resurfacing in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in a new collection edited by Edward L. Risdén.⁴ Such authorization, when imbedded in the medieval text through classical mythological reference, allusion, or analogy, reflects a rise of interest in national identity: other patronymic founders of European nations were similarly connected genealogically with Aeneas after the fall of Troy, who in the *Aeneid* fled to Italy, where he founded the Roman Empire. The myths elevated Arthurian romance to the stature of the great foundational epics by the ancient Greek and Roman authors, Homer, Virgil, and also Ovid, who had joined Virgil as a canonical author in the school and university commentary tradition by the twelfth century.

Another recent study, by K. Sarah-Jane Murray, roots several romances by Chrétien de Troyes in twin antecedents—firstly, Greek and Roman traditions, namely, Plato's *Timaeus* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and secondly, the Celtic, as found in Irish monastic saints' lives and *immrama*.⁵ This intertwining of different traditions involves more than a straightforward identification of classical and Celtic influence in the medieval work. The flowering of late medieval vernacular romance and court poetry is often regarded, even in recent scholarship, as somehow separate and distinct from the medieval scholastic/clerical tradition of commentary on classical works such as the Latin epic. This perception assumes, however incorrectly, that educated poets then, as now, might safely ignore in the formation of their own poems whatever passed for the latest trend in medieval literary criticism on Virgil and Ovid. However, poets were often familiar not only with the original texts of the epics studied in courses on grammar, but also with material from commentaries on them in manuscripts available at monasteries or in royal libraries or declaimed in lectures at the great universities of Paris or Oxford.

As far as romances are concerned, such a familiarity is particularly evident in relation to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, for which a commentary tradition and *translatio studii* only began modestly in the sixth century and in earnest in the twelfth century, rather than much earlier, especially in the fourth to sixth centuries, as was the case with Servius's and Fulgentius's influential commentaries on the *Aeneid*. Witness to the impact of this singular event in regard to twelfth-century French romance is the existence of anonymous adaptation of Ovid in the vernacular—not only the mythological *Narcisse* but also *Pyramus et Tisbé* and, as well, Chrétien's

own adaptation of *Philomela*.⁶ An excellent early study of the Ovidian influence on Chrétien's *Conte du graal*, in particular, of the myth of Narcissus, as found in both Ovid and Guillaume de Lorris's *Roman de la Rose*, is that of Michelle Freeman (1976).⁷ Freeman also discusses the influence of themes and symbols in Ovid (and other authors, for example, of the *Roman d'Enéas*) on Chrétien, in particular, found in the myths of Pelops, Procne, Minerva and Arachne, and Myrrha, in *The Poetics of "Translatio Studii" and "Conjointure": Chrétien de Troyes's "Cligés"* (1979).⁸ And it has been argued very plausibly that Chrétien himself may have drawn on contemporary Ovid glosses by Arnulf of Orleans in constructing *Erec et Enide*.⁹ Another author notably famous for having drawn on Ovid and on glosses on the *Metamorphoses* is Jean de Meun in his late thirteenth-century continuation of the courtly-love romance begun by Guillaume de Lorris, the *Roman de la Rose*.

That there was, in fact, crossover among many literary traditions, genres, modes, poetics, sources, and cultures in the late medieval vernacular work has been attested by Martine Meuwese in her work on mostly late Arthurian codices in the Netherlands, although she most frequently identifies inaccuracies and mistakes rather than what might be regarded as intentional cross-cultural breaches.¹⁰ As additional manuscripts of known Arthurian works are classified, described, and studied, scholars may likely find that there exist additional disjunctions and odd interpretations that vex scholars' formal expectations but add to our understanding of the complexity of the transmission of genres and traditions.

Here, I will demonstrate this crossover by means of three examples of an Arthurian knight glossed in a late medieval romance (or commentary on a romance or epic), implicitly or explicitly, in terms of a classical mythological figure. These mythological figures all appear in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or in an Ovidian context: a commentary or gloss on the *Metamorphoses*, a commentary on an Ovidianized poem, or a remythification of a late medieval Ovidian prosimetrum commentary that bears the marks of slippage between the mythological vernacular and its genre as commentary. What appears to be idealization of the chivalric hero in text or illumination conceals, in the three examples I will discuss, an ironic and critical subtext about the dangers of narcissism and pride in the hero's role—in short, what appears to be a more clerical critique of the knight's anti-courtly (and misogynistic) behavior justified by the spiritual danger of succumbing to deadly sin. The classical myths used to gloss the knights' roles as courtly lovers are those of Narcissus, Hermaphroditus, Adonis, Perseus, and Pygmalion. Most of these mythological figures also

appear in the *Rose*, a thirteenth-century work seminal for the understanding of medieval courtly love and a bridge between Ovid and the romance. The courtly-love condemnation of excessive adherence to the chivalric can be, in part, explained by the borrowing of Ovidian mythological figures from the *Rose*, or found in a commentary on, or a poem indebted to or influenced by, the *Rose*.

LANCELOT: AMANT, MARS, AND HERMAPHRODITUS

As a type of the *Rose*'s protagonist, the lover Amant, Lancelot is glossed because of his bed, known as the Perilous Bed. According to Charles V's physician, Évrart de Conty (ca. 1330–1405), the Perilous Bed is described in the *Istoire de Lancelot* (*History of Lancelot*), presumably that romance written by Chrétien known as *Lancelot ou le Chevalier de la Charrette*. This gloss appears in Évrart's prose moralization of a very long (30,000-line) anonymous poem that itself "glosses" the *Roman de la Rose*, the *Livre des Echecs amoureux* (*Book of the Chess of Love*) (ca. 1375), also believed to have been authored by physician de Conty.¹¹ According to him, the goddess Diana in *Chess of Love* describes the Perilous Bed of Lancelot in the *Rose*'s Garden of Mirth (Vergier de Deduit), on which the lover will not rest well because its context is one of great peril.

Pour ce donc que le lit est ordené pour reposer, et le repos n'est pas bon ne seur ou il y a peril, sy come il y avoit ou lit perilleux dessusdit ouquel Lancelot se coucha par sa grant hardiesse, sy come l'ystoire faint, pour ce en parle Dyane pour segnefier a l'acteur dessusdit qu'il ne fait bon reposer ne arrester ou vergier de Deduit qui est avironnés de tant et de sy grans perilz.

(Because, then, a bed is ordered for repose, and repose is not good or safe where there is danger, as there was in this perilous bed in which Lancelot lay by his great boldness, as the history says and pretends, Diana speaks of it to signify to the author that he will not rest well in the Garden of Mirth, which is surrounded by so many and such great dangers.)¹²

The bed of dangers is then compared with that bed on which Venus (goddess of love) and Mars (god of war) were surprised by her husband, Vulcan. In the *Rose*, in which the Garden of Deduit offers the lover idleness (through Oiseuse, the gatekeeper) in which to gaze on the Rose, the dangers of the bed are similarly the consequences of adulterous love, one possible component of courtly love, at least for Lancelot. In Évrart's commentary, the bed in which the husband finds his lady